

*compliments of  
J. G. Scott*

# SPEECH

OF

Mr. J. G. SCOTT

In responding to the toast of

“THE DAY WE CELEBRATE”

At the Centennial Banquet of the

## Quebec Board of Trade

at the Chateau Frontenac, 20th February, 1909.



Containing some suggestions as to a plan for the revival of  
shipbuilding in Canada, which would also enable us to  
contribute to the maintenance of the Imperial Navy.



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*The* EDITH *and* LORNE PIERCE  
COLLECTION *of* CANADIANA



*Queen's University at Kingston*



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## Speech of Mr. J. G. Scott.

After a very eloquent speech from His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Alphonse Pelletier, in reply to the toast of his health, Mr. J. G. Scott said: "Your Honor, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen. I am sorry, for your sakes, that the duty of responding in English to the toast of the "day we celebrate" should have fallen upon me. I urged very strongly upon the committee that this would be more appropriately handled by some member connected with the timber trade or with the shipping interests, but so many of these gentlemen are absent on their annual trip to England, or elsewhere, that my advice has not been followed. I shall endeavour to be as brief as possible, so that you may have a good opportunity of listening to the speeches which you will hear from the distinguished gentlemen representing the Government, as well as the representatives of all the leading Boards of Trade of Canada, from Halifax to Winnipeg, who have honored us with their presence here to-night, and who will reply to the toasts following this one. The Quebec Board of Trade celebrates this evening the one hundredth anniversary of its foundation. A century in the commercial history of a seaport in America does seem a long time, and that period covers nearly all the important events in the history of Canada under the British regime. On the 21st of February, 1809, when Sir George Prevost was Governor of the Province and Sir Isaac Brock, an officer of the Quebec Garrison, in the same year when the Hon. John Molson of Montreal ran the first steamboat in Canada, the "Accommodation," between Quebec and Montreal, was held the first meeting of the Quebec merchants at the Union Hotel on St. Anne street, for the purpose of forming the organization of the present Board, which was afterwards incorporated by the Legislature in 1842.

In the year 1809 the exports of

Quebec, which were practically the exports of the whole of Canada, consisted of furs, timber, ships and agricultural products. The imports were, as now, dry goods, hardware, iron, wines, liquors and other general merchandise. To form an idea of the growth of the trade of the port it will be interesting to give the figures of the tonnage, imports and exports of Quebec in 1809, and at intervals from that date until the present time. Doing this we find that whilst, in 1793, the total number of vessels of all classes arriving in Quebec was 114, of about 16,000 tons, in 1808 this had increased to 334 vessels of 70,275 tons. The largest of the vessels of 1793 was 400 tons, and the average size 150. In 1850 the tonnage was 543,000 tons and in 1907 539,000 tons.

The records of the imports and exports of Quebec prior to 1850 were, unfortunately, burned by fire at the Custom House. But from 1850 to 1907, at intervals of about ten years, they are as follows:—

Fiscal	Seagoing		
	Years.	Exports.	Imports. tonnage.
	1850.	\$6,314,612	\$2,404,807 543,963
	1858..	6,252,184	2,783,150 518,600
	1860..	7,271,959	3,358,676 671,137
	1870..	10,131,165	5,670,332 674,894
	1880..	6,488,997	4,242,775 572,562
	1890..	7,503,216	3,358,103 439,092
	1900..	5,173,843	5,439,922 461,176
	1907..	4,768,403	13,322,824 539,914

These figures show that since the formation of the Board of Trade, in 1809, the shipping of the port has increased from 70,000 tons to 539,000 tons, and that the imports and exports have increased since 1850 from \$8,700,000 to \$18,000,000. But the tonnage is of seagoing vessels only, and does not include inland craft nor coasting vessels, which during the last few



years represent a very large tonnage. Nor do the exports for 1907 include any goods sent by rail, such as cotton to China via Vancouver, or pulpwood to the United States by inland craft. If these were included, the value of exports in 1907 would be about doubled.

Our merchants, unfortunately, devoted their attention too much to one line of business, namely, the exportation of square and sawn timber. This trade attained great dimensions during the Crimean War, when the Baltic was closed, and also during the American Civil War, when the pitch pine ports were closed. The saw mills of the late Geo. Benson Hall at Montmorency were among the greatest in the world, and all around the great harbour of Quebec were other large mills, owned by the Bennetts, Breakey, Atkinson, King, Ritchie, Patton, Jones and others. This business attracted great fleets of ships, and in one year, 1863 I think, no less than 1700 sea-going vessels arrived at Quebec, manned by about 40,000 sailors. The harbour was white with the sails of these ships, and the coves were a forest of masts. Numbers of river steamers towing great rafts of pine, oak, elm and other timber were constantly arriving, and an army of men found employment dressing and preparing this timber for market. The activity caused by this great shipping business, with vessels at every pier, from Indian Cove to Cap Rouge, a distance of ten miles, can be readily imagined. The great firms engaged in this trade, Caldwell, Burnett, Price, Sharples, Dobell, Ross, Levey, Gilmour, Symes, Burstall, Young, Roberts, Smith, Fitzpatrick, Connolly, Lemesurier, Dunn, Hamilton, Thomson, Welch, Fry, Forsyth and others did business in the millions, and their names were household words in every lumber camp and in every bank from Gaspe to the head of Lake Superior, as well as in Ohio and Michigan. Some of these firms have been in business for generations, and some of these old families are represented here this

evening. Not only did they load ships, but they owned them. Allan Gilmour & Co. had a fleet of large ships sailing between Quebec and Glasgow—"The Ailsa," the "Advice" and others—whose painted ports, towering masts, and trim appearance brought to mind the East Indianmen of boyhood stories. Quebec had the honour of building in 1831 the first steamship to cross the Atlantic, the "Royal William," a splendid vessel of 1350 tons, and the late John Munn built at his shipyard in St. Rochs about sixty years ago, the largest river steamer of her day, 312 feet in length, which ran for many years between Quebec and Montreal.

The late Senator James Gibb Ross is said to have had at one time no less than eighty ships in commission, his full purse was always at the disposal of the ship-builder, and many a new ship's keel was laid down with that great man's money in the face of a depressed market, simply to give employment to the thousands of shipcarpenters of St. Rochs, who would otherwise have had no work. Shipbuilding was Quebec's greatest industry in those days, and many a beautiful ship was launched from the shipyards of the River St. Charles and from those of Levis and Wolfe's Cove. Mr. F. C. Wurtele of Quebec, has written a most interesting paper on this subject, from which it appears that this trade was at its greatest in 1864, when no less than 105 new ships, measuring over 60,000 tons, and worth probably \$2,000,000, were built at Quebec. The names of many of Quebec's great shipbuilders are still represented in our midst, such as Lee, Black, Baldwin, Munn, Parke, Valin, Rosa, Davie, Russell, Samson, Sewell, Oliver, Gingras, Gilmour, Roche and others. This great industry, unfortunately, has disappeared. We have shared the fate of St. John, Halifax, Yarmouth, Windsor and Bangor, and we are no longer shipbuilders nor ship owners. I say ship owners, but I should make an exception, for the fleet of splendid

steamers of the Quebec Steamship Co. which, sailing from New York, where its house flag is almost as well known as that of the Cunards, dominates the trade of the United States with Bermuda and the West Indies, and which owes the success of which all Quebec people feel so proud, to the perseverance and energy of its president, during a generation, the late Hon. Pierre Garneau.

It is sad, Mr. Chairman, to dwell upon these reminiscences of former greatness, but it is encouraging to think that, notwithstanding all, we are still, commercially speaking, alive. What we have lost in shipping, and ship-building, we have regained, as Mr. Chateauvert has told us, in shoe factories and other industries, and through the opening up of our back country by local railways, so that the population of our city has increased, slowly, if you will, but the value of property and the civic revenue most substantially; a glance at the banking history of the city will prove this. In 1818 our first bank, the Quebec Bank, was established; six years later its deposits amounted to \$128,000. About fifty years later our three other local banks, the Nationale, the Union and the Caisse d'Economie, were formed. To-day the deposits in these four banks amount to \$49,000,000, in which the Caisse d'Economie, the Savings Bank of the French Canadian working people, figures for nearly \$9,000,000. These figures do not include the business of eight outside banks doing business in this city.

Surely, then, we should not be discouraged. We have suffered much, but we have more than held our own in spite of all. The future is before us, the port of Quebec stands at the gateway of the shortest possible line between the limitless wheat fields of the Northwest—now receiving the choicest agricultural population of the world—and tidewater of the St. Lawrence. Three Transcontinental railways have pushed their tracks to our docks. The great Empress steamers, the forerunners, we hope, of greater ships to come, have made Quebec their

terminus. I leave it to the eloquent speakers who are to follow me to explain what this will mean to us, and what these great railways and steamships will do for our future, and also what they will require from us in the way of dock and terminal accommodation, without which they can do nothing. In concluding, permit me to say one word from a national point of view. We in Canada have enjoyed nearly a century of profound peace; no one has dared to disturb us, because we have the protection of the most powerful navy in the world. Without the burden of an army or a fleet—the curse of the rest of the civilized world—we have been permitted to devote all our means and all our energies to the development of our own country; and the Motherland, whose motto is still “Ships, Colonies and Commerce,” has given us her sons to till our soil, and her money, lavishly and without stint, to build our railways and dig our canals and to buy everything we can produce. To-day the Motherland is straining every nerve to keep the control of the seas, the cost of new battleships is bearing heavily on the people, the income tax is a shilling in the pound, and many men in the old country are out of work and suffering. The control of the seas is as vital to us as it is to her. If it should pass away, the “strong man armed” could crush us like an egg shell, and England’s colonies would become the prey and the vassals of the nation possessing the strongest navy and army, because human nature, alas, is always the same, and the millenium has not yet come. And yet, in view of this emergency, we do not lift a hand to help, or offer a dollar toward the cost of the navy which protects us.

This attitude is surely unworthy of a free and self-respecting people. Even if we formed part of the United States, the only alternative to our present position, our share of the annual cost of their navy and army would be twenty millions.

I take advantage of the presence here of members of the Government



to suggest for their consideration whether it should not be possible for Canada to contribute towards the cost of the navy and at the same time revive the shipbuilding industry which at one time meant so much for Quebec and the Maritime Provinces. For instance, a moderate encouragement would suffice to bring some of the British builders of iron ships to this side. Ship yards and naval docks could be established at Quebec and Halifax, or both, where, under the protection of their citadels, and not further away from the supply of steel and coal than is Belfast, not only would a merchant navy be created to be manned, as in former days, by Canadian sailors, but a battleship or cruiser might be built, say, every second year, as our contribution to the Imperial navy. In this way, whilst doing our duty to the common cause, Canada would again become a ship-building and ship owning country, as we were thirty years ago, when we ranked, if I remember well, third or fourth amongst the nations of the world as ship owners.

I have not attempted, Mr. Chairman, to give any history of the port of Quebec prior to the foundation of the Board of Trade just a century ago. The subject would be full of interest, from the days of Jacques Cartier and Champlain, though nearly two centuries, during which the hardy sailors and fishermen of Brittany and Normandy—as daring on sea as were on land the soldiers and missionaries of New France, who discovered the Northwest and the Mississippi—braving the tempests of the Atlantic in their little vessels, traded to the St. Lawrence, down to the period when the exports of Canada were directed to Liverpool and London, instead of St. Malo and Honfleur. All this fascinating story can be read in the pages of Sir James Le Moine, the descendant, if I am not mistaken, of the renowned French admiral who gave England so much trouble by capturing all her forts and posts on Hudson's Bay. And, moreover, I fear, Mr. President and gentlemen, that I have already ex-

hausted your patience. But I hope that the gentlemen from other parts of Canada who are here this evening will be indulgent, because people living in an old town like Quebec are apt to be prosy and reminiscent, and perhaps a little vain of their antiquities and of their history—and not altogether without cause, because there are French families in Quebec who can boast of nearly 300 years' residence, and English-speaking families in Quebec who date from 1759. For you must know that 1608 and 1759 to us Quebec people are dates, just as "the forty-five" is to the Scotch Highlander. And, then, the blood is somewhat mixed, and the result is you will meet many a Scotch name speaking French and many a French name speaking English, and some Channel Islanders thrown in. But the mixture produces good results, and Quebec is apt to be proud of her sons who, after their early discipline in football on the glacis of the citadel, or in the quadrangle of Laval, and though perhaps handier to wield a paddle or tie a snowshoe than to handle the pen or the ledger, go away and make names for themselves and win military fame on the Nile, in the Soudan or the Transvaal, as their forefathers did at Carillon, Chateaugay and Seringapatam, or build canals in India, or railways in New Zealand, or Brazil, or govern colonies, or command fleets, or control the destinies of their country, or attain the judicial ermine, or are at the head of a Transcontinental railway, or great shipbuilders in the old country, or become great bankers in the West, and sometimes come home with Victoria Crosses and other decorations on their breasts, or modestly hidden in their pockets, but generally do not come home at all.

So that we are rather a queer people altogether, and not entirely commercial, and our guests of this evening from more modern places must just bear with us for this occasion, seeing that a centenary like this does not come very often.











